

Message Text

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E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IV

SUBJ: THE GUEBIE PROBLEM: WHO WILL BE ON TRIAL?

SUMMARY:

THE TRIALS OF JEAN-CHRISTOPHE KRAGBE-GNABE, LEADER OF THE 1970 GUEBIE INSURRECTION, AND HIS ACCOMPLICES MAY NOT BE AS UNEVENTFUL AS ANTICIPATED. THERE IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT KRAGBE-GNABE IS DECEASED, A FACT WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN SUPPRESSED BY THE GOVERNMENT WHICH FEARS IT WILL BE ACCUSED OF HIS EXECUTION.

INTRODUCTION:

IN AN ATTACK UPON THE HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY REGIME IN OCTOBER 1970, ONE JEAN-CHRISTOPHE KRAGBE-GNABE AND A GROUP OF GUEBIE FOLLOWERS - PART OF THE BETE GROUP - ASSAULTED THE BAOULE RESIDENTS OF GAGNOA AND ENGAGED IN AN ARMED CLASH WITH THE POLICE. KRAGBE-GNABE DEMANDED THE PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION AND HIS OWN INSTALLATION AS HEAD OF STATE. ALTHOUGH THE ATTACKERS WERE QUICKLY SUBDUED, THE GOVERNMENT REACTED AS IF IT HAD BEEN A GENUINE THREAT.

DURING A NATIONAL CONSUL MEETING ON DECEMBER 3, 1970, WHICH

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ADDRESSED ITSELF TO THE "GAGNOA AFFAIR," THERE WAS A LOUD HUE AND

CRY FOR KRAGBE-GNABE'S PRESENCE BEFORE THE GROUP. THE PRESIDENT STATED THAT HE COULD NOT BE BROUGHT BEFORE THEM AND THAT HE WOULD BE TRIED BY IVORIAN JUSTICE. HOWEVER, THERE WAS SPECULATION AT THAT TIME THAT KRAGBE-GNABE HAD ALREADY BEEN TRIED BY THE TRIBUNAL AND QUIETLY EXECUTED AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD LATER ANNOUNCE HE DIED FROM ILLNESS OR HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE. SPECULATION WAS APPARENTLY GENERATED BY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF WHEN HE SEVERAL TIMES REFERRED TO "SUICIDE" DURING HIS PRESENTATION OF THE GAGNOA INCIDENT.

THE TRIAL:

IN RESPONSE TO DEMANDS FROM VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY STUDENTS, IVORY COAST'S CHIEF PROSECUTOR, LANZENI COULIBALY, ANNOUNCED IN FEBRUARY 1974 THAT KRAGBE-GNABE AND HIS ACCOMPLICES WOULD SOON BE BROUGHT TO PUBLIC TRIAL. THE TRIAL, WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY SLATED FOR JUNE 26, WILL NOW BEGIN IN GAGNOA JULY 25. A TOTAL OF 10 TRIAL LAWYERS WILL REPRESENT THE 192 ACCUSED. THE GOIC IS SENDING ITS CHIEF PROSECUTOR TO ARGUE ITS CASE.

ALL WOULD BE FINE EXCEPT FOR ONE THING; THIS REPORTER LEARNED FROM A GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONARY WHO WISHES TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS THAT KRAGBE-GNABE IS REALLY DEAD. HE DID NOT KNOW WHEN OR HOW, BUT CLAIMED HE KNEW FOR A FACT THAT KRAGBE-GNABE IS DECEASED.

THERE HAVE BEEN VARIOUS RUMORS CONCERNING THE DISPOSITION OF KRAGBE-GNABE SINCE THE 1970 REVOLT. IT WAS BELIEVED FOR SEVERAL YEARS THAT HE WAS IN FRANCE, GIVEN AN OCCASIONAL AIRPLANE TICKET IN ORDER TO SPEND A WEEKEND AT HOME, ALL THANKS TO HOUPHOUET'S KINDNESS. THE EMBASSY WAS THEN TOLD BY THE CHIEF PROSECUTOR IN 1974 THAT THE LEADER HAD BEEN IN PRISON SINCE THE REBELLION AND WOULD BE TRIED ALONG WITH THE OTHERS.

IT IS PURELY SPECULATION ON THE PART OF THIS REPORTING OFFICER BUT, FACED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTINUED UNREST, IT DOES SEEM PLAUSIBLE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS PURPOSELY DELAYED THE TRIAL FOR ALMOST 4 YEARS AS A RESULT OF KRAGBE-GNABE'S DEATH IN 1970, BY WHATEVER CAUSES, NATURAL, SUICIDE OR EXECUTION. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE TENSION IN THE AREA FOLLOWING THE ABORTIVE UPRISING AND, HAD KRAGBE-GNABE'S DEATH BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SURELY HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF HIS EXECUTION.

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MENT WOULD SURELY HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF HIS EXECUTION.

CONCLUSION:

WHAT ALL THIS SEEMS TO MEAN IS THAT IF KRAGBE-GNABE IS DEAD AND HIS DEATH BECOMES PUBLICLY KNOWN, HE MAY WELL BECOME MARTYR FOR THE BETE TRIBE AND ALSO FOR THE LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN THE SOCIETY. IT ALSO SEEMS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT WITHOUT SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION OF KRAGBE-GNABE'S DEATH BY THE GOIC, THE LATTER COULD FIND ITSELF

ON THE DEFENSIVE IN THIS TRIAL AND POSSIBLY THE VICTIM OF VERBAL
ABUSE AND PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION.
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